

AIAA regards the Research Laboratory as important. Nearly every U.S. rocket system used today uses technology based on the Air Force Research Laboratory's work. The laboratory has tested and developed rocket propulsion technologies for defense and space systems. The Saturn rockets that powered America's Apollo flights were tested there. There are unique facilities for continuously testing space satellite propulsion thrusters for up to 7 hours and immense rocket stands that are still valuable research and testing tools. In fact, Research Laboratory personnel are now working on new technologies in coordination with industry and other government agencies through the Integrated High Payoff Rocket Propulsion Technology program.

For over half a century, a quiet, dedicated group of people have joined together on a remote part of Edwards Air Force Base to pioneer the concepts that have made modern space flight and defense technologies possible. AIAA's recognition is one we should all agree with and one in which Air Force Research Laboratory personnel past and present can take just pride.

REGAS RESTAURANT

HON. JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 24, 2000

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, one of America's finest dining eateries, Regas Restaurant, in Knoxville, closed its doors after 81 years of service to East Tennessee.

The Regas family has had a tremendous impact on the lives of just about everyone in the community. I can assure you that I am a true example of that as I met my wife, Lynn, there. Many families have made dozens of memories that will be cherished for a long time.

Regas Restaurant was always the place to go for a special event, anniversary, or birthday.

Frank and George Regas began the Restaurant in July of 1919 as a coffee shop named the Astor Cafe. It later became known as the Regas Brothers Cafe. The restaurant was renamed once again in 1938 as Regas Restaurant. From then until now, the family business has changed, but their attentiveness to every person that walked through their doors will always be remembered.

Bill Regas, son of Frank Regas, began helping out in the restaurant in the 1950's up until Regas closed its doors in July, and he served as President and CEO of the restaurant for many years. Mr. Regas has had quite a number of accomplishments, not just locally, but nationally:

He was a charter member of the Knox County Industrial Development Board;

He earned the Knoxville "Young Man of the Year" in 1955;

He was President of the National Restaurant Association from 1980 to 1981;

He was inducted into the Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame in 1992; and

He was recognized by the International Food Manufacture Association with the Silver

Platter Award for "1992 Nation's Independent Operator of the Year."

I want to say thank you to Mr. Bill Regas and the Regas family and bring to the attention of my colleagues and other readers of the RECORD several articles from the Knoxville News-Sentinel praising their service to the citizens of East Tennessee.

[From the Knoxville News-Sentinel, June 23, 2000]

FOOD, GOOD FRIENDS, MEMORIES MAKE SAYING GOODBYE TO REGAS A DIFFICULT TASK
(By Walter Lambert)

The announcement was simple and straightforward. On July 8 Regas Restaurant on Gay Street would close forever.

That left me in a major dilemma. First, the logical part of my brain keeps telling me that this is just a business. It is just a place where people go to eat and visit. It is just a place.

However, the emotional part of my brain tells me I am about to lose a life-long friend, and I am bereft.

The Regas family has been operating a restaurant at this place for 81 years. Folks, that is more years than even I have been alive.

Now I know that this does not mean that we are losing these good folks to the restaurant business in Knoxville (or around the Southeast for that matter). They will still operate the absolutely wonderful Riverside Tavern and the ever-improving Harry's (now to be known as Regas Brothers Cafe).

Again, the logical side of my brain tells me that we will still have the pleasure of dining with them. My emotional side is not satisfied.

Maybe I should start this at the beginning. The first "real" restaurant I can remember going to was the Regas. I went with my grandmother when I was 6 or 7 or 8. It still had a lunch counter then. Of course, it also had a dining room, but there was no door between the lunch counter and the dining room, so you went through the kitchen to get there.

Imagine if you will a 7-year-old boy who is still skinny but already greatly interested in food. Think of him walking through a working kitchen in a real restaurant and, even further, think of him being with his grandmother who knows the people in the kitchen by their first names. I have not forgotten those memories.

Like everyone else in and around Knoxville, Regas was a special-occasion kind of place. It was also where you went on Sundays after church. It was where you went for birthday parties or new jobs or . . . I doubt I need to continue.

In today's world, 81 years is a very long life for a restaurant. This is especially true for a restaurant that remains family-owned and operated. This is an institution. I ate my first broiled steak there. Before this, I thought steaks were pounded within an inch of their life and cooked with a brown gravy.

I must make a small confession—and I am willing to bet that there is a whole generation of Knoxvilleans who would make this same confession. I genuinely loved the veal cutlets at Regas, which they served with meat sauce. Again the logical side of my brain tells me that meat—breaded, fried and covered with meat sauce—makes no sense at all. We ate them anyway, didn't we?

We also ate clam chowder that was good enough for a president's inauguration. We had flounder brought fresh from Boston (when that was still a big deal). We also ate bread. I think I first tasted a hard roll at Regas. We also ate muffins.

I always thought that serving those blueberry muffins was a very bad business decision for the Regas family. What a dessert they made.

I have contended in recent years that Regas was the only place left in Knoxville that knew how to cook vegetables. I have made a lunch of vegetables and good bread at Regas on many occasions.

The Regas family for three generations has been there to make us feel special. My wife, Anne, and Frankie Regas Gunnels go back to high school together. We have all gotten to know Kiki Regas Liakonis, and Bill and Frank and Gus Regas, and all the rest. Now we admire the way the new generation has taken the torch. We know how much this family has meant to this community and to all of us.

I know that these good people have made a rational business decision that reflects the changing way people live and eat. I know they will still be part of our lives through their other fine restaurants. I know that they will still be a major asset in this community.

However, I also know that I will not go past the corner of Gay and Magnolia without thinking of times and people long gone. I will remember good times and good meals. I will remember many special times in my life. And I will be sad that this place is there no more.

[From the Knoxville News-Sentinel, July 10, 2000]

CLOSING OF REGAS IS BITTERSWEET FOR MANY PEOPLE WITH FOND MEMORIES

EDITOR, THE NEWS-SENTINEL: Since the sad announcement that Regas would close July 8, everyone in Knoxville made a pilgrimage there for one last memory. One week a group of bankers and former bankers gathered once again to make another memory.

Twelve of us sat at the same three tables in the bar that we used to sit at every Friday from the mid '70s to the late '80s. We laughed all night at the stories we told about when we worked for the United American Bank and the World's Fair.

As usual, the always gracious Bill Regas came by to say hello, as well as his son, Grady. We expressed our thanks to Bill for all the wonderful memories we had made over the years at his restaurant. We had hosted many luncheons and dinners there for retirements, promotions, committees and recognition events.

We brought many dignitaries there during the World's Fair. Dinah Shore, Bob Hope, Andy Warhol, Jane Pauley, Bryant Gumbel, Lorne Greene, Peter Maxx, Wayne Rogers, Lloyd Bridges, Dolly Parton, Red Skelton and Ray Stevens all dined there, as well as ambassadors from China, Peru, Japan, Australia, France and Germany. The Lord Mayor of London was impressed with Regas and made this observation: "In England we eat to live, but in America everyone lives to eat." How true.

Many of the founding Christmas in the City committee meetings were held at Regas in the '70s. Bill Regas was one of the first downtown businesses to sign on as a corporate sponsor. Kiki Liakonis organized the first Greek pastry sale, which was always a huge hit. The Regas family never said no to any worthy cause.

Regas will always be a part of Knoxville's heritage as the best restaurant in town for many years where everyone has celebrated birthdays, graduations, anniversaries and weddings. Regas always made everything

special because of its gracious owners, the hospitable staff, the excellent food and the commitment to quality.

We will certainly miss the Regas brothers and their family at Regas. Thanks to all for 81 years of wonderful memories.

DOROTHY SMITH,
Knoxville.

REGAS RESTAURANT LAUDED

EDITOR, THE NEWS-SENTINEL: The announced closing of Regas Restaurant saddened all of us. Our family's memories with Regas date back over 50 years. I had even committed the Regas telephone number to memory. It is always the perfect place for a special occasion, birthdays, anniversaries, etc. My wife, Judy, and I enjoyed our first dinner date at Regas. It is truly the gathering place.

What made Regas so great? The obvious answer is their special attentiveness to their guests. Bill and Gus Regas set the tone. Kiki Liakonis was ever so gracious. One shall never forget Hazel Schmid, the most wonderful, friendly hostess. A special mention to the professional, skilled waitresses—Trula Lawson and Phyllis Whitt.

I must tell this story: Back in the '50s when Regas was open for Sunday lunch, our church, First Baptist, had a special relationship. Bill Regas was a member of First Baptist and a good friend of our pastor Dr. Charles A. Trentham. Trentham's sermons were always timed so we would barely beat the other churchgoers to Regas. Needless to say this accounted for some of the good attendance at First Baptist.

My father, Robert L. Johnson, best summed up my impression of Regas. While dining at Regas with only a short period of life left, he mentioned to Bill Regas that, if heaven didn't have a Regas Restaurant, he wasn't sure he wanted to go.

Thanks to the Regas family for so many special memories.

JOSEPH L. JOHNSON
Knoxville

EDITOR, THE NEWS-SENTINEL: Talk about memories. There are not too many old-timers like us left who remember Regas Restaurant years ago.

I go back to when we moved to Oak Ridge in 1943 from Akron, Ohio. My husband and I, being from Georgia and Tennessee, wanted to bring our sons ages 3 and 6 back south.

One of our special treats was going to the University of Tennessee football games and dinner after the games at Regas. My brother and his family also moved back. We were very close. They had two girls 6 and 9. Regas always was a special birthday place for all.

On Dec. 17, 1999, I lost my brother at age 96 on his birthday. Regas was always his favorite place to go on his birthday—the prices reasonable, food great. Our favorite song was "Happy Days are Here Again." Now our sons are in their 60s with grandchildren. I'm sure they would love it.

Take it back, Grady.

VERA ROBERTS
Knoxville

[From the Knoxville News-Sentinel]
REGAS CLOSING GAY STREET LANDMARK
(By Mike Flannagan)

Regas Restaurant, which has epitomized five-star dining in Knoxville for more than eight decades, will close July 8.

In a way, its passing marks the end of an era, but the Regas family will retain a pres-

ence in downtown dining even after the restaurant that brought them to prominence closes its doors.

"We're transferring the spirit of Regas to the Riverside Tavern (on the downtown waterfront) and Harry's," said Grady Regas, chief executive officer of Regas Brothers Inc.

The first Regas Restaurant opened July 7, 1919, on the north end of Gay Street. It will close 81 years and one day later.

"We will celebrate up until the door closes," Grady Regas said.

Harry's by Regas, 6901 Kingston Pike, will be renamed Regas Brothers Cafe, which was an early name of the original restaurant, and some dishes from the Gay Street menu will be added to that of the Cafe eatery.

Restaurant staff members from the original Regas will be relocated to one of the two remaining restaurants, Grady Regas said.

Greek immigrants Frank and George Regas opened their original restaurant as an 18-stool coffee shop at the corner of Gay Street and Magnolia Avenue two blocks from the Southern Railway Station. The descendant of that coffee shop seats 350 in the dining room and 100 in the Gathering Place lounge, part of a 1978 expansion.

The restaurant became the "gathering place for fine dining" in Knoxville when the owners introduced tablecloths in the "early '50s," according to Bill Regas, president emeritus of Regas Brothers Inc. Back then, he said, people used to dress up and go out to eat, but that has changed to more casual attire.

"We used to have women lined up in dresses outside of the restaurant before the football games on Saturday," Bill Regas said.

The company's board of directors made the "tough decision" to close the restaurant during a meeting Monday.

Bill Regas, who has been identified with the restaurant since the 1950s, was clearly emotional over the announcement of the closing and referred most questions to his son, Grady.

Besides cultural changes, Regas Brothers Inc. cited other reasons for closing the restaurant and refocusing attention on the Riverside Tavern and Harry's.

The original restaurant's future appeared prosperous when one possible site for the new convention center was on nearby Jackson Avenue. But when the Public Building Authority instead selected World's Fair Park for the convention center and Interstate 40 work changed access to the front of the restaurant, its fate became sealed, Grady Regas said.

"This is not like a car wreck," he said. "We have anticipated this (closing) for a long time."

Rumors have circulated that Grady Regas would buy the now-defunct Great Southern Brewing Co. on Gay Street across from the newly restored KUB building.

"We looked and still look at every business opportunity," he said. "But until a deal is a deal, there is nothing to talk about."

Regas Brothers Inc. has talked with several "interested parties" about the purchase of the Gay Street building.

[From the Knoxville News-Sentinel, July 5, 2000]

LINGERING AFFECTIONS (By Louise Durman)

"Remember when" will be the passwords at Regas Restaurant Saturday, June 8.

With the closing of the down-town landmark, guests will share memories of a first

date, an anniversary, birthday or special occasion party.

Regas celebrates its 81st anniversary on Friday, so this will be called "the anniversary weekend."

Among the family members hoping to be at Regas Saturday night will be Bill Regas, chairman emeritus of Regas Brothers Inc.; his son, Grady Regas, current CEO; and Gus Regas, vice chairman emeritus.

Reservations for Friday and Saturday have long been filled. In fact, since the announcement in June of the restaurant's closing, reservations for lunch and dinner every day have filled quickly by those who want "one last chance" to dine there. Serving time has been extended daily to try to serve those who want to come.

"The outcry, love and affection have been unbelievable," says Grady Regas. He is asking customers to write down favorite Regas memories to possibly use in a book someday.

Regas will continue to own and operate Riverside Tavern and the current Harry's by Regas. Harry's is scheduled to be changed in the fall to Regas Brothers Cafe, an early name of the original Regas Restaurant that opened July 7, 1919, on the north end of Gay Street. "It (Harry's) will be more casual, far friendlier," says Grady Regas. Harry's will be remodeled for a better traffic flow, he adds.

Regas will honor its commitments for private parties at the restaurant and its other restaurants. Catering by Regas will continue, and manager Carla Humbard is booking events.

The Regas building on Gay Street is up for sale. After the closing, paintings, sketches, furniture and equipment will be moved to other Regas facilities. Many of the employees will be placed in one of the two other restaurants.

Thirty-five former employees gathered at Regas last week for a final dinner. Trudy Lawson, who worked there as a server and cashier for 38 years, was among those who helped organize the farewell.

Bill Regas and other family members stopped by to say hello. The employees enjoyed sharing reminiscences of their years at the restaurant.

"Our message," says Grady Regas, "is we're still the same family, same team, and we have the same spirit." He describes it as a family in transition, moving from one house to another.

"When we have asked people, 'What does Regas mean to you?' no one mentioned the building."

He says that regular customers who have been accustomed to having a special table and certain servers will be taken care of in the other restaurants.

Many of the menu items from Regas will be integrated into Riverside Tavern and Harry's which is becoming Regas Brothers Cafe.

Going to Riverside will be the Mediterranean chicken salad, strawberry shortcake, smoked salmon and many of the famed "features of the day."

The Harry's location will get the scrod, red velvet cake and some featured items. Once it becomes Regas Brothers Cafe, which will be open for lunch and dinner, it will serve the scrod, New Zealand lobster, prime rib, crab cakes, baked potato, red velvet cake and blueberry muffins.